

CONFERENCE RECAP:

JENNIFER MCVEY, MDIV, EVENT & EDUCATION MANAGER

"There is something special about this conference."

"It is not often that I go to a conference and am excited to hear all of the plenary speakers."

"There are few places I can go and have such charitable discussions about bioethics."

These were just a few of the unsolicited remarks that I heard from our conference attendees as I walked with them to various sessions and breaks. The 18th annual summer conference, *The Scandal of Bioethics: Reclaiming Christian Influence in Technology, Science, and Medicine* was a unique and meaningful time for many, including the staff at CBHD.

A distinctive moment that contributed to the significance of the conference was the opportunity to honor Dr. Edmund Pellegrino's life and work with the installation of the Edmund D. Pellegrino Special Collection in Medical Ethics and Philosophy in the Center's newly renovated research library. [Editor's Note: The installation of the Pellegrino Special Collection was highlighted in the Summer 2011 issue of Dignitas.]

The Scandal of Bioethics, inspired by the title of Mark A. Noll's 1994 book, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, set out to explore the legacy of Christian influence in bioethics, while facing the future, the purpose, and the place of Christian thought in bioethics. Essentially, "Has Christian bioethics made a difference?" Seventeen years after Noll wrote his award-winning book, the scandal is no longer that intellectual pursuits amongst evangelicals are waning, but that Christian thought is being marginalized and sometimes even disregarded specifically in the field of bioethics. The plenary addresses



Edmund Pellegrino, MD, MACP, delivers his plenary address at the 2011 conference.

the SCANDAL of BIOETHICS



Attendees at a plenary session.

challenged and inspired the conference attendees and offered hope that we can live out our faith in bioethics even though our approach may vary from others.

Thursday evening, Dr. Pellegrino took us on a journey through the history of bioethics of which only a few are aware, a history where people of Christian moral reflection were at the forefront of the discipline. He reminded us that the legacy of Christianity is "a legacy of the whole life of Jesus as it was focused on the care of the sick, the poor, and those on the margins of life. Bioethics as it exists today is not precisely a Christian endeavor, but is engaged in the consideration of issues, problems, wants, and needs...that are intrinsic to the Christian legacy." How can Christians make a difference in bioethics? Dr. Pellegrino called us to evangelize by the example of our own behavior, learn how to engage productively in dialectic engagement, and treat each other charitably, which he called the "supreme virtue of the Christian life."

Drs. Hollinger, Stevens, and FitzGerald further unpacked how we can apply our convictions in the issues surrounding bioethics. Dennis P. Hollinger, PhD, called us to "live in the world with authentic presence," having a subtle influence from within the places we work and live. David Stevens, MD, assured us that there is a noble pursuit of medicine based on "convictions and beliefs, (accountability, human dignity, objective moral truth) character, and conduct." Although he

was specifically addressing physicians, the overall virtues and principles he espoused could be applied to any profession and all of one's life. Kevin T. FitzGerald, SJ, PhD, PhD, challenged us to reflect deeply about what we do with the gift of biotechnology, exhorting us to "use the gift for what it was intended, not whatever you want."

The conference closed Saturday afternoon with the colloquium, "Can Bioethics Be Christian: Three Visions for Engagement." H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr., MD, PhD; C. Christopher Hook, MD, FACP; and Daniel P. Sulmasy, MD, PhD, engaged this question from Orthodox, Evangelical, and Catholic perspectives respectively. Dr. Engelhardt argued that since we live in a post-Christian society and disagree with the secularist about reality and religion we will never agree on ethics. He commented "in the first 300 years Christians knew people needed to convert to understand." However, this should not deter us from communicating our position without embarrassment. Dr. Hook agreed in part with Engelhardt, but pointed to the experience of the patient as possible common ground that could bridge metaphysical differences. Finally, Dr. Sulmasy appealed to natural law as the connection point and that we engage bioethics as witness that is foremost expressed through behavior. After the three presented, they engaged in a lively



Paige C. Cunningham, JD, CBHD's Executive Director addresses attendees at the 2011 conference colloquium. In the background from left to right; H. Tristram Engelhardt Jr., MD, PhD; C. Christopher Hook, MD, FACP; and Dan Sulmasy, MD, PhD

include: Paige Cunningham, JD, Pia de Solenni, PhD, Monique Chireau, MD, C. Ben Mitchell, PhD, with invited speaker Chris Smith (R-NJ). Watch for additional updates as information becomes available. This promises to be another excellent conference and I hope to see you there! ●●●



Hans Madueme, MD, PhD (Cand), Research Analyst, leads a parallel paper session.

discussion of each other's plenary that left the audience with much to contemplate. The 2011 conference concluded with a thoughtful reflection on the weekend from CBHD executive director Paige Cunningham.

The plenary addresses at this past summer's conference were exceptional. It has energized the CBHD staff as we prepare for next summer's conference. Mark your calendars now for Reclaiming Dignity in a Culture of Commodification, July 12-14, 2012. The speakers will explore important ethical considerations surrounding developments in reproductive practices and global women's health through the lens of reclaiming dignity in a culture of commodification. Confirmed speakers

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Paper and poster proposals are **now being accepted** for the upcoming 19th Annual CBHD summer conference,

Reclaiming Dignity in a Culture of Commodification.

The conference will be held on July 12-14, 2012, on the Deerfield campus of Trinity International University.

Join us as we explore important ethical considerations surrounding developments in reproductive practices and global women's health through the lens of reclaiming dignity in a culture of commodification.

All serious proposals relevant to the study of bioethics are welcome, particularly those in the area of biolaw, nursing ethics, clinical ethics, and theological engagement.

Deadline: Thursday, March 1, 2012.

For requirements, guidelines and deadlines of abstracts, contributed papers and posters, as well as conference details, please visit:

www.cbhd.org/call-for-proposals